

Fatherhood Research and Practice Network
Grants for Evaluation Research
Announcement of a Request for Proposals

The Fatherhood Research and Practice Network (FRPN) is pleased to announce a new competitive grant opportunity to support the conduct of rigorous evaluations of fatherhood programs. More information about the FRPN can be found at www.frpn.org.

Applicants should be teams of researchers and fatherhood programs with the ability to develop and implement a rigorous evaluation of a program promoting father involvement in low-income families. FRPN is also interested in exploratory and descriptive studies that systematically assess the effectiveness of innovative recruitment, retention, and data collection methodologies OR innovative curricula or service delivery approaches for fathers.

Areas of interest for this funding cycle include (1) Impact evaluations of fatherhood services designed to promote economic stability, foster effective parenting, and/or promote co-parenting and healthy relationships, and (2) Studies of innovative methodologies to recruit, engage and retain fathers for employment and parenting services and/or mothers and fathers for co-parenting intervention. (See Areas of Interest for further information about the types of studies FRPN seeks to fund). Strong research proposals falling outside these priority areas (i.e., that address research questions intended to advance effective practice with fathers) will also be considered.

FRPN is interested in working with fatherhood programs funded by grants from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as well as programs with non-ACF funding. The FRPN's website includes a message board to help researchers and fatherhood programs interested in applying for an award find a researcher or program partner.

This year, FRPN has \$500,000 to \$700,000 for grants and expects to make 2-4 awards of approximately \$50,000 and 4-5 awards of \$100,000. Applicants are encouraged to leverage FRPN awards with other grant or matching funds. Each award will be for a maximum of 24 months. Administrative overhead or indirect costs may not exceed 15%; these costs will be included as part of the total award. Although costs associated with the delivery of normal

program services may not be covered by the FRPN award, FRPN funds can be requested to retain personnel to enhance recruitment and retention of project participants into the study, and the delivery of new treatments and interventions that are the subject of the proposed evaluation.

Background

Numerous fatherhood programs have been developed over the past several decades to address the needs of low-income fathers who face significant barriers to being involved with their children. Although a number of evaluations have been implemented to assess the effect of these programs on fathers and families, most evaluation studies of fatherhood programs have been descriptive (e.g., pre-test/post-test studies with no control group). Further, few of the studies concern low-income fathers in under-studied populations such as African American, American Indian, Hispanic and nonresident fathers. A key objective of the FRPN is to increase the number and quality of evaluation studies assessing the impact of these fatherhood programs on fathers and families and, through such evaluations, to learn more about how to better serve low-income and nonresident fathers and families.

In late 2013 and early 2014, FRPN convened three workgroups of expert fatherhood researchers and practitioners to identify the state of evaluation research on fatherhood programs and to recommend future directions for evaluations. The findings of the three workgroups (economic security, effective parenting, co-parenting/ healthy relationships) are available in reports published on the FRPN website at www.frpn.org. We strongly recommend that applicants review the workgroup reports for information about evaluation gaps identified by FRPN as priorities for future evaluations. The following is a summary of some of the important evaluation gaps identified by the workgroups.

- **Recruitment, engagement and retention.** What strategies, settings, incentives and services are effective in improving recruitment, engagement and retention of fathers in program services? How can fatherhood programs increase the number of low-income and under-studied populations that they enroll and how can programs retain them?
- **Effective curricula and programs for fathers.** What are the core/fundamental elements of an **effective** fatherhood program and intervention? What works for whom? What

interventions improve father employment and earnings, engagement with children, and/or effective co-parenting?

- **The effectiveness of different modes of service delivery.** Does it matter how programs sequence their service components (e.g., employment services first versus parenting services first)? How effective is one service or approach compared to another (e.g., are programs more effective if they work only with fathers or if they include mothers or partners?)?
- **The adaptation of interventions to serve fathers and families.** How effective is it to adapt interventions dealing with employment, parenting and co-parenting that have been used with other types of participants and families for low-income and under-studied populations? Do programs for TANF recipients, middle-class families, married or divorced couples, and/or custodial parents work equally well with nonresidential fathers and other under-studied groups?
- **Designs responsive to the needs of specific sub-groups of fathers.** What program designs or components work best with different fathers and families? Are there interventions that are more effective with different racial/ethnic groups, different age groups, children in different age categories and/or fathers who have children in multiple households?
- **Engaging mothers and improving co-parenting among unmarried parents particularly in fatherhood programs.** What program designs and components serve to improve co-parenting among unmarried parents? Are there effective ways to engage mothers? Are there intervention formats that work well? What referral arrangements and incentive schemes are most productive?

Areas of Interest

FRPN is interested in awarding grants to evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to address one or more of the following areas: parenting, co-parenting or economic self-sufficiency. FRPN will consider the following types of studies:

- Projects that focus on low-income, never-married, nonresident fathers who face significant barriers to being involved with their children.
- Projects that involve rigorous evaluation research designs (i.e., randomized control trials or strong quasi-experimental designs that use a comparison group) or use advanced statistical techniques (e.g., propensity score matching) when a true control group is not possible.
- Replication studies that build on prior research of effective programs and interventions.

- Exploratory studies that systematically examine the effectiveness of innovative approaches to working with fathers (e. g., participant recruitment, engagement, retention, service delivery, curricula, and data collection).
- Projects that involve established programs with a track record in recruitment, retention, and low attrition.

Although they are important program types, the FRPN will *not* use its limited resources to fund evaluations of programs targeting primarily divorced fathers or fathers currently in prisons and other institutionalized settings. We welcome evaluations of programs in a range of other settings including but not limited to home visiting programs, schools, courts, and health care settings. Applicants are free to suggest other applied research studies that will contribute to the field.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must demonstrate a collaboration between a researcher and practitioner, although the award will be made to a single organization that will be responsible for accepting the award and administering the grant. To be eligible, applicant organizations must be a university or research organization, a non-profit with 501 (c) (3) IRS status, or a state or local government agency based in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The researcher should have experience evaluating fatherhood programs or doing evaluations of other social programs/interventions. To maintain the independence of the evaluation, the researcher should not be an employee or have any vested interest in the organization implementing the fatherhood program. Early career investigators who have the requisite evaluation skills are welcome to apply.

Applicants who are awarded grants from the FRPN must agree to comply with U.S. Department of Health and Human Service requirements for subawards (see Grants Policy Statement at <http://www.hhs.gov/asfr/ogapa/aboutog/hhsgps107.pdf>, pages II-2 (“flow down”) and II-78). Grantees must agree to participate in FRPN-sponsored learning community activities. Grantees must also agree to use FRPN grants only to conduct the evaluation and not for the delivery of routine services; although FRPN grant funds can be used to enhance recruitment,

retention, and data collection activities, and the delivery of new treatments and interventions that are the subject of the proposed evaluation.

Application Process

The application process involves two steps. First, an eligible organization must submit a *letter of interest* for the FRPN's evaluation funding. The FRPN will review the letters and invite applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and address the items noted below to submit a *full proposal*. The full proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by expert fatherhood researchers and practitioners. The following table shows the requested application materials and timeline:

Stage of Application Process	Date
RFP posted on FRPN website	January 2, 2016
All prospective applicants must submit a letter of interest (maximum 3 pages, single-spaced)	Deadline: February 5, 2016
Applicants will be notified regarding whether they are invited to submit a full proposal (full proposals must be invited)	On or before March 4, 2016
Invited applicants must submit a full proposal (maximum 20 pages, double-spaced)	On or before April 8, 2016
Applicants will be notified whether they have been selected for an award	On or before June 30, 2016
Funded projects begin	July 1, 2016

Letter of Interest

Letters of interest (3 pages, single-spaced) must include the following information and be signed by both the researcher and a senior official within the fatherhood program who can commit the organization to participate in the study. It is important that both the researcher and practitioner work together in developing this letter. The signatures constitute a demonstration of willingness to collaborate on the proposed evaluation. Letters of interest must be submitted in a single PDF document via email to FRPN Submissions (frpnsubmissions@gmail.com) no later than 11:59 pm EST on February 5, 2016 and must include the following:

1. Description of the research questions and population being evaluated.

2. Statement about the evaluation gap being addressed and the contribution of your proposed evaluation to the fatherhood field and the potential for the evaluation results to improve practice.
3. Brief description of the research design (including expected outcomes and outcome measures), and proposed research activities, recruitment plan, and data collection strategies including who will be responsible for any baseline and follow-up data collection efforts.
4. Identification of applicant organization and description of collaborating partners. This should include a brief overview of the program such as services offered, targeted population, source(s) of funding for the fatherhood program, and number of fathers served, and a brief biography of the researcher and the lead program representative.
5. Brief statement of the amount of grant dollars sought, any expected match or funding from other sources, the research activities that the grant will fund (e.g., researcher's time, data collection), and the proposed timeframe for the conduct of evaluation activities.

The FRPN will invite applicants to submit a full proposal if their letters respond to items 1 through 5 and also address the important considerations and eligibility criteria outlined in this RFP. In their letters, applicants must demonstrate that: they have identified a research question that addresses one or more evaluation research gaps (see FRPN reports for examples or suggest alternatives); the proposed evaluation has the potential to advance the fatherhood field; the study focuses on under-studied, low-income fathers and their families; the study involves a rigorous research design or an acceptable exploratory study outlined above; there is evidence that the program and researcher have a viable plan to recruit and retain fathers for this study and collect the proposed data; and the study involves a close collaboration between a researcher and fatherhood program.

Full Proposals

Full proposals should not exceed 20 pages, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and a font of 12 or larger. The page limit does not include budget and attachments, including letters or

other documents specifically requested in this RFP. Please submit all items in a single PDF document via email to frpnsubmissions@gmail.com no later than 11:59 pm EST on April 8, 2016.

Proposal Organization and Selection Criteria

Full proposals should be organized in the 6 sections noted below. Suggested page limits are provided for guidance. Bulleted items describe what the FRPN reviewers will be considering during their review of each proposal topic but weights for each item are not provided.

1. Importance of the Evaluation Being Proposed (4 pages)

- The evaluation issue being addressed is clearly defined and is important.
- The study addresses an important gap in evaluation research of fatherhood programs.
- The evaluation will lead to improvements in fatherhood services and practice or the methodology used to recruit and retain fathers and collect evaluation data.
- The study targets a population of fathers noted in the interest areas listed above.
- The study focuses on a program or practice model that can be replicated by other programs.

2. Study Design (8 pages)

- The study is rigorous and well-designed and will generate credible evidence about the program/intervention's impact.
- If an exploratory study is proposed, it uses a strong systematic research design.
- The study has a sufficiently large sample as shown through a power analysis (power analysis is not needed for an exploratory study).
- There is a plan to recruit and retain the number of participants needed for the study (including referral sources), a back-up plan if those sources fall short, and a plan for data collection during each phase of the study.
- Appropriate staffing to meet recruitment, retention, and data collection goals.
- The primary outcomes identified are reasonable based on the practice/intervention being studied and the study period. The methods for measuring outcomes are feasible, reasonable and will produce valid data.
- The data analyses proposed are appropriate.

- The project has IRB approval or a reasonable plan to obtain IRB approval.
- The study can be conducted (including data analysis and report writing) within a maximum of 24 months (timeline or milestone chart must be submitted as a required Attachment).
- The study applies high standards for addressing attrition bias, has a plan to insure fidelity and plans to evaluate implementation of the program.¹

3. Qualifications of the Researcher (1 page)

- The researcher has experience evaluating fatherhood programs or doing evaluations of other social programs/interventions. Early career investigators with requisite evaluation skills are welcome to apply.
- There are resumes/curriculum vitae for the lead investigators as a separate attachment and they indicate expertise appropriate to carry out the study.

4. Description of the Fatherhood Program (2 pages)

- The program has a solid track record of providing fatherhood services and offers a treatment or intervention dealing with economic security, positive father engagement with children and/or co-parenting/healthy relationships that is of appropriate intensity and quality to produce an effect on fatherhood outcomes.
- The program has stable funding for its fatherhood program services that will span the time duration of the evaluation.
- The program has a demonstrated ability to recruit, serve, and retain a sufficient number of fathers to satisfy sample size requirements within the required time period for an effective evaluation. (The number of fathers enrolled in the fatherhood program in the past several years and attendance in program activities should be provided.)
- The program will devote a sufficient amount of time and effort for recruitment and retention of fathers, and where appropriate for data collection, during the period when the evaluation is being conducted.

¹ (see the *What Works Clearinghouse* standards for assessing attrition bias):
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_attrition_v2.1.pdf

- There is an adequate description of the population that the program serves and the nature and amount of services it provides.
- There are resumes or biographical sketches for the lead fatherhood program partners as a separate attachment, and they indicate that staff members have appropriate expertise for their roles.

5. Collaboration and Staffing Plan (3 pages)

- The proposal provides evidence that the researcher has a collaborative relationship with the fatherhood program delivering the intervention for this study, has consulted with the program on the research questions to be addressed and the study design, and that there is a clear plan for the researcher and program to continue communication and collaboration throughout the entire award period.
- The fatherhood program will deliver the intervention or service described in this proposal and agrees to the proposed study design including random assignment (if relevant).
- The proposal describes the roles and responsibilities of key project staff including research personnel and personnel at the fatherhood program.
- The proposal identifies a clear plan about how needed data will be collected, who will be responsible for data collection during each phase of the study, who will supervise the collection of data, how the data will be kept confidential, and other research implementation issues.
- The proposal presents evidence that a sufficient amount of staff time will be devoted to data collection.
- There is a management and staffing plan that is clearly connected to the project design described in Section 2 of the proposal.

6. Capabilities and Competencies (2 pages)

- The applicant organization is identified and has specified the amount of funding requested, and provided a detailed, reasonable budget and budget narrative as an attachment.
- The applicant organization and any contractors that the applicant will use to implement and manage this project have the experience, capability and capacity to

conduct it and have highlighted any previous experience implementing projects of similar design or magnitude.

- The applicant organization has the capacity to administer the grant and has included details on its system for fiscal accountability such as project cost accounting, internal controls, policies and procedures, and the ability to prepare financial reports.
- The researcher has access to state-of-the-art computing and software facilities.

Attachments for Full Proposal

These attachments provide detail on the budget for the project, the timeline for project performance, and the capabilities and competencies of the applicant organization and its contractors. Grant funds are to be used primarily for evaluation costs, including but not limited to: research salary and/or consultant fees, research assistance (no tuition remission), data tracking and data collection costs, participant incentives, research travel, and software or hardware (not to exceed \$1,500). FRPN funds should not be used to pay for general expenses associated with the operation of the fatherhood program, although FRPN grant funds can be used to enhance recruitment, retention and data collection activities, and the delivery of new treatments and interventions that are the subject of the proposed evaluation. Administrative overhead or indirect costs may not exceed 15%.

- A detailed budget (up to two pages) for the full grant period showing all personnel costs, travel costs, supplies, participant incentives and administrative overhead or indirect costs limited to 15% total for both research and program organizations. Please show any additional funding that has been committed to the project that would be added to the FRPN award.
- A budget narrative explaining each budget category (personnel, travel, contractual expenses and other costs), including the payment of participant incentives, transportation assistance and food. Please note dedicated expenditures for participant recruitment, retention and data collection.
- A timeline or milestone chart showing major research tasks and completion of each task by month or quarter (e.g., Month 1 or Quarter 1).

- Curriculum vitae/resumes or biographical sketches for all researchers and lead fatherhood program partners.
- A two page overview of the agency in which the fatherhood program is housed, including any past experience with evaluation research and a statement about its motive for participating in an evaluation research project.
- For non-university or non-government applicants, a copy of the applicant's determination letter for 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status and a 2014 or 2015 audited financial report.
- A memorandum of understanding between the researcher and practitioner outlining the partnership and plan for working together.
- A letter of commitment showing the researcher will have access to needed data if the proposed project involves an augmentation of an on-going study or funding by another source.
- Reference list.

What to Expect in the Grant Agreement

FRPN will collaborate with grantees to ensure that funded projects are successfully executed and that grantees contribute to and participate in a learning network aimed at improving the quality of evaluation research and practice in the fatherhood field. As a condition of their award, awardees will be asked to:

- Utilize some outcome measures identified and developed by FRPN staff (where appropriate) to test their effectiveness and build cross-program knowledge.
- Provide brief semi-annual updates on the study's progress including milestones, problems encountered, instruments developed, study recruitment totals, and any changes to the original study plan.
- Notify and seek prior approval for *major* changes to the original study plan.
- Participate in monthly telephone meetings to review progress of the evaluation including participant recruitment, retention, and data collection.
- Participate in FRPN learning community activities such as periodic conference calls and/or webinars with other current and future grantees.

- Submit a draft final evaluation report three months prior to the termination of the award. Thus, for 24-month projects that begin on July 1, 2016, awardees must submit a draft final report no later than April 1, 2018, and the revised final report that incorporates feedback by the FRPN by June 20, 2018.
- Post the final report on the FRPN website.
- Present the results of the research at a research conference convened by FRPN in Washington, D.C. in August/early September 2018. (FRPN will pay travel costs for the lead investigator and program representative.)

Help for Programs and Researchers Seeking Partnerships

The FRPN's website includes a message board ("The Researcher & Practitioner Forum") to help researchers and fatherhood programs interested in applying for an award to find a researcher or program partner. When submitting a message for posting on the board, please include the following information: 1) your contact information for potential partners to reach you, 2) a short summary of what you seek to contribute to the application (type of program you offer or research you would like to do), and 3) the type of partner you are looking for. You can also submit a request via the list-serve at frpn@list.frpn.org. To sign up for the list-serve visit www.frpn.org.

Questions

Please contact Rebecca Kaufman (rebecca.kaufman@temple.edu) with any questions.